

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release June 5, 1978

Levitt 202/343-5634

LARGEST AIRBORNE HUNTING ACT INVESTIGATION

Six men have been charged and five airplanes seized in Alaska in the largest Airborne Hunting Act investigation to date, Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced today.

The charges involve use of aircraft to hunt the huge Alaska brown ("Kodiak") bear.

Named in U.S. criminal informations are four hunting guides: Dennis E. Thompson and William E. Sims of Anchorage, and Jeff Graham and Olaf Madson of Port Heiden, Alaska. Sims and Thompson are partners in the Bonanza Flights and Guide Service. Sims and Graham are also Directors of the Alaska Professional Hunters Association. Alaska State criminal complaints name Dick Gunlogson, a registered guide from Anchorage and secretary of the Alaska Professional Hunters Association, and King Hoermann, an employee of Texaco, Inc., of Arlington, Texas.

Thompson, Sims, Graham, and Madson are charged with violating the Federal Airborne Hunting Act which makes it unlawful to herd or harass wildlife from an aircraft or to knowingly participate in such activities. Gunlogson and Hoermann are charged with violating an Alaska statute which prohibits the taking of brown bear on the same day a hunter is airborne.

The investigation spanned a 10-month period with the alleged violations occurring October 12, 1977, and on May 10, 11, and 18, 1978, in southwest Alaska.

The Airborne Hunting Act carries a maximum penalty of \$5,000, a year in prison, and forfeiture of any wildlife taken and any aircraft used in the violation. The Alaskan law carries a maximum \$1,000 fine, 6 months in prison, and forfeiture of any wildlife taken or aircraft or equipment used in the violation.

U.S. Attorney Alexander O. Bryner filed the informations in the U.S. District Court in Anchorage on May 26 and May 31 based upon an undercover operation conducted by special agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with officers of the Alaska Department of Public Safety, Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection.

The investigation is continuing and additional charges are expected in the near future.

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